

February 21, 2013

Hello, my name is Kiki Dixon. I am 34 years old, and the disability that I have is Cerebral Palsy. I live in Vernon, CT.

In the summer of 2000, I started at Independence Unlimited as a consumer, who wanted to live a better life, and also gain independence for herself. Some of the services that I received from the agency were volunteer, transportation, and vocational assistance.

By volunteering at Independence Unlimited, I learned job skills and gained confidence in myself to pursue my career. By providing me with transportation services, Independence Unlimited assisted me with going back out into the community to explore new opportunities, and contain better social interaction skills. Through the vocational services that I received from the agency, I learned what the value of being responsible for myself truly meant to me.

As a volunteer at Independence Unlimited, one job skill that I learned was how to perform office duties (such as: answering the phones, entering data, photocopying, faxing, and so forth). As time passed on, I became so confident and independent (with completing all of the requirements on my own) I grew to love office work. After that, I won the "Volunteer of the Year" award that the agency offered in 2001. Due to the factors that were previously mentioned, I decided to talk to Candace about me working at the agency as a clerical assistant.

In 2002, Candace did hire me as a clerical assistant for Independence Unlimited. I held the position for more than six years. As a result of keeping the same occupation for such a long period of time, I learned to be more independent by managing my own money, and contributing financial support to my family and to our home.

Furthermore, being an employee at Independence Unlimited helped me to become more independent when I decided to set a goal for myself. For instance, in 2003, I enrolled in the Disability Specialist Program at Manchester Community

College. I am still enrolled in the program, and I'm currently completing my internship at Independence Unlimited. I will receive my Associate's Degree in the spring of 2014.

As an intern, I am learning that when you provide services for people with disabilities, you have to possess an open mind and compassion in order to understand what individuals may need. All of the employees, at Independence Unlimited, do hold open minds and compassion for their consumers.

In addition, I still believe that Independence Unlimited is a great place to work. For instance, the agency offers great services and skills (such as peer counseling, IL skills, information and referral, and so on) to help people with disabilities live independently in the community; as well as move on to greater aspects in their lives.

Based on all of the facts that I have given, I would like permission to ask the State if it would put the funding for Independence Unlimited back in the budget please. Thank you all for your time. Does anyone have any questions?